

REMARKS

Claims 1-5 have been amended. Claim 6 has been canceled without prejudice. Claims 10 and 11 have been added. Thus, Claims 1-5, and 7-11 are currently pending. By these amendments, no new matter has been introduced into the claims.

Rejection according to 35 USC §102:

On the merits, claims 1-3 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,073,773 (Van Steenbrugge et al.). Applicant amended independent claim 1 to distinguish the present application from Steenbrugge. To this end, amended claim 1 includes limitations neither disclosed nor suggested by Steenbrugge. The present invention relates to a production machine including a plurality of production units each performing a specific step in a production process. A network provides specific control information, for example provided by an external control system. The network comprises a plurality of switching devices as disclosed in Fig. 1 and 2 of the present application. Thus, a flexible routing of the control information is possible. New claim 10 adds the limitation that one of the production units is used as a redundant unit and can effectively replace a malfunctioning unit through the plurality of switching devices in the network system.

Rejection according to 35 USC §103:

Claims 6-9 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Van Steenbrugge in view of Sherer. Applicant canceled claim 6 and added a new independent claim 11. The new independent method claim 6 includes similar limitations as independent claim 1 and 10. Therefore applicant believes that this claim is also allowable.

The dependent claims include all the limitations of the respective independent claims and thus are allowable at least to the extent of the independent claims.

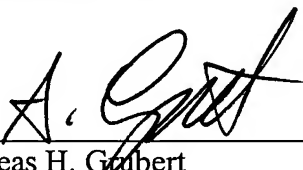
CONCLUSION

The application as defined in the pending claims is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §112 and §102 in view of the cited prior art. Therefore, applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of all pending claims.

Applicants do not believe that any other fees are due at this time; however, should any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 to 1.21 be required for any reason relating to this document, the Commissioner is authorized to deduct the fees from Deposit Account No. 02-0383, (*formerly Baker & Botts, L.L.P.*) Order Number 071308.0251.

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Expires: June 30, 2005

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